

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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NEA/PAB:MAUSTRIAN
INR/RNA:WANDERSEN(SUBS)
-----110357Z 130461 /72-62
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 005483

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AF, IN

SUBJECT: AFGHAN PERCEPTIONS OF INDIA'S POLITICS

REF: KABUL 0198

1. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, PRIME MINISTER GANDHI PUBLICLY ACCUSED THE CPI DECEMBER 23 OF CONDUCTING A PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST HER. SHE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PROVOKED BY THE CPI'S RECENTLY SHARPENED CRITICISM OF HER SON SANJAY AND THE CONGRESS PARTY ALTHOUGH RISING TENSION IN CONGRESS-CPI RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN PUBLICLY EVIDENT SINCE SHORTLY AFTER THE IMPOSITION OF THE EMERGENCY IN JUNE 1975. A DAY LATER, ON DECEMBER 24, THE PRIME MINISTER REPEATED HER ACCUSATIONS BEFORE 50,000 DEMONSTRATORS WHO "SPONTANEOUSLY" RALLIED OUTSIDE HER HOME IN SUPPORT OF THE NEW LINE. THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS WERE QUICKLY ECHOED BY CONGRESS LEADERS
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IN SEVERAL STATES AND BY THE HEAVILY CENSORED PRESS.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER SO FAR APPEARS TO HAVE A LIMITED OBJECTIVE: TO PUT AN END TO THE CPI'S CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT AND HER SON. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE BEEN ANGERED BY THE OVERALL SHIFT TO THE RIGHT IN INDIAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE, AND ESPECIALLY THE GOVERNMENT'S LOOSENING OF

RESTRAINTS ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR. SANJAY GANDHI IS VIEWED

AS THE PRIME FORCE BEHIND THE SHIFT. SANJAY HAS ALSO BEEN CAMPAIGNING THROUGH THE YOUTH CONGRESS APPARATUS (WHICH HE CONTROLS) AGAINST COMMUNISTS AND LEFTISTS IN STATE CONGRESS ORGANIZATIONS, AND IN LATE DECEMBER HE ACHIEVED A MAJOR VICTORY BY FORCING THE "RESIGNATION" OF THE PRO-COMMUNIST CHIEF MINISTER OF ORISSA STATE.

3. THE SOVIET UNION HAS NOT ALLOWED THESE EVENTS TO COME IN THE WAY OF CONTINUING GOOD INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS. THE SOVIETS HAVE RECENTLY OFFERED INDIA A BARTER DEAL INVOLVING 5.5 MILLION TONS OF SOVIET CRUDE OIL, AND ARE REPORTEDLY PREPARED TO REOPEN THE RUPEE-RUBLE VALUATION NEGOTIATIONS IN JANUARY WITH A MORE FAVORABLE OFFER. THE CPSU IS REPORTEDLY COUNSELING THE CPI TO AVOID FRONTAL OPPOSITION WITH THE CONGRESS, WHICH IT BELIEVES WOULD ONLY DRIVE THE PRIME MINISTER FURTHER TO THE RIGHT AND PERHAPS RISK A SEVERE CRACKDOWN ON CPI MEMBERS. THE PRIME MINISTER HERSELF IS CAREFUL TO DRAW A SHARP DISTINCTION IN PRONOUNCEMENTS ON THE CPI AND THE SOVIET UNION. IN HER DECEMBER 23 SPEECH CONDEMNING THE COMMUNISTS SHE NOTED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE TRADITIONALLY HELPED INDIA IN TIMES OF STRESS AS WELL AS PEACE.

4. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD ADOPT AN ANTI-CPI LINE IN ORDER TO SEND "SIGNALS TO THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION" AS WAS SUGGESTED IN KABUL.

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5. FOR DELHI--THE EMBASSY MAY WISH TO SUPPLEMENT AND COMMENT ON ABOVE HIGHLY ABBREVIATED ANALYSIS. PLEASE ALSO REPEAT REPORTING ON THESE DEVELOPMENTS TO KABUL AS APPROPRIATE.

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Disposition History: n/a
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